

Taylor had authority to take control because just before Moore's call for backup was received at the armory, a telegram arrived from Governor Russell through the state's adjutant general that instructed Taylor to "take command of Captain James' company ... and preserve the peace."⁶⁴

Form No. 125.
THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.
 INCORPORATED
 21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
 THOS. T. ECKERT, President and General Manager.

Receiver's No.	Time Filed.	Check.
SEND the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.		
<i>Nov 10 1898</i>		
<i>To St. Col. Walker Taylor</i>		
<i>2nd Reg N.C. State Guard</i>		
<i>Wilmington N.C.</i>		
<i>The Governor directs that</i>		
<i>you take command of</i>		
<i>Captain James Com-</i>		
<i>pany at Wilmington</i>		
<i>and preserve the peace</i>		
<i>Attention invited to</i>		
<i>Article Twenty</i>		
OR READ THE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT ON BACK.		

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.
 INCORPORATED
 21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
 THOS. T. ECKERT, President and General Manager.

Receiver's No.	Time Filed.	Check.
SEND the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.		
<i>189</i>		
<i>To</i>		
<i>eight regulations of</i>		
<i>the North Carolina</i>		
<i>State Guard. Report</i>		
<i>your action to</i>		
<i>the Governor direct.</i>		
<i>By order of the Governor</i>		
<i>and Commander in Chief</i>		
<i>John S. Davis</i>		
<i>Adjutant General</i>		
OR READ THE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT ON BACK.		

Telegram from Governor Russell to Walker Taylor
 Image: North Carolina State Archives

Before the governor's telegram arrived, Commander George Morton of the Naval Reserves sought approval from a city official to grant the military authority to take over, but he claimed he could not locate the mayor or a police officer. Instead, Morton's men found Deputy Sheriff G. Z. French in his room at the Orton Hotel and requested permission to march Morton's men from his headquarters in Brooklyn. French complied, possibly under duress, and wrote out an order instructing Morton to "use all force at your disposal to quell the existing violation of the peace in this city."

Morton then sent a telegram to the governor informing him of his plan of action and also notified Walker Taylor of his intentions. The governor later ordered Morton to place his men under Taylor, although the transfer of command had already taken place by the time the telegram was received. Morton's men, equipped with Lee magazine rifles and a Hotchkiss rapid-firing gun, assembled at the corner of Third and Princess.⁶⁵

As soon as the first shots were fired, a "running firefight" erupted on Harnett, with scores of men, black and white, running in all directions from the intersection, some firing at the opposite side as they ran.⁶⁶ William Mayo, a white man who lived at 307 Harnett, was seriously wounded by a stray bullet.

Mayo's wounding presented a rallying point for the whites who then began to retaliate. Because of Mayo, whites fired in unison into a group of black men and another five or six died near the intersection of Harnett and Fourth Streets. Mayo was taken to a nearby drug store for treatment by Dr. John T. Schonwald who lived close to the scene. Mayo's injury was serious, but

⁶⁴ Governor Daniel L. Russell Papers, Correspondence, November 1898, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

⁶⁵ NC Public Documents, Adjutant General's Report, 1899, Document 9.

⁶⁶ Hayden, *WLI*, 88.